United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1199
6 August 1992

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Heavy shelling continues in Sarajevo, as Deputy Force Commander of United Nations Protection Force holds talks there on breakdown of cease-fire; suspension of airlift scheduled to end tomorrow.

+ Information on atrocities in detention camps in former Yugoslavia had been handled with care not to jeopardize those at risk, representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees tells press.

+ United Nations Development Programme approves "Capacity 21" initiative, to help developing countries prepare and manage sustainable development plans; initial $18 million committed for the effort.

* * *

There had been "exceedingly heavy" shelling around Sarajevo airport today, the Spokeswoman for the Secretary-General told correspondents today. She noted that the 72-hour suspension of the humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo, ordered in response to the escalation of shelling on Tuesday, was due to end tomorrow evening.

She also indicated that the Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Major General Philippe Morillon, was in Sarajevo conducting talks with the parties to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina today, on the breakdown of the ceasefire. He had arrived in the Bosnian capital yesterday aboard a French military aircraft.

* * *

Information on human rights violations and atrocities in detention camps in former Yugoslavia had never been kept from public knowledge, but in publicizing the matter, one also had to make sure not to jeopardize the lives of those one was trying to help, a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Albert Alain Peters told reporters at a press briefing at Headquarters today.

(more)

For information media – not an official record

For that reason, he explained, the information had been passed on to the organization responsible for investigating allegations about detainees and prisoners, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC had "worked very hard" on the issue, interviewing and examining 4,000 people since 7 July, "in a context which is extremely difficult to access".

In a press release issued today, UNHCR said that for its part, it tried "to expose human rights abuses whenever it can without jeopardizing the lives and security of the victims or those involved in humanitarian operations". That is what UNHCR had done in the case of a document issued on 27 July, which gave details of one of the worst alleged prison camps, and which was circulated to 4,300 journalists, diplomats and humanitarian organizations worldwide.

The UNHCR said it welcomed the growing international concern over reports of widespread human rights abuses in former Yugoslavia. Although UNHCR had no first-hand confirmation of such violations, it had passed on to ICRC information on alleged abuses collected by UNHCR field officers from various credible sources.

"For these reasons", the release says, "UNHCR welcomes all efforts to promote humanitarian access to victims of the war in ex-Yugoslavia, including a 4 August UN Security Council statement demanding immediate access to all detention centres by ICRC and relevant international organizations. Recent media reports have also played an invaluable role in this process."

* * *

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) yesterday approved the "Capacity 21" initiative, to support developing countries in the preparation and management of their own sustainable development plans. The UNDP and the Governments of Japan, Canada and other donors have committed an initial $18 million to this effort. Contributions are expected to reach $100 million by the end of the year.

The recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro called on countries to integrate environmental considerations into all development activities and to prepare sustainable development strategies. Agenda 21, adopted at the Conference, provides a guideline for global action along those lines. The Capacity 21 initiative translates that into effective national programmes, making the best possible use of United Nations agencies, regional institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The initiative will focus on human resources training and the strengthening of key regional and national institutions, such as universities, research centres, governmental offices and non-governmental offices. In addition, Capacity 21 will assist in the exchange of environmentally sound technologies, and improve the capabilities of countries to utilize those technologies.

(more)

The initiative emerged from UNDP assessments of country needs, made in preparation for the Conference in Rio. The studies showed that the lack of national capacities to formulate and implement environmental policies could prove to be a major obstacle in making sustainable development work.

* *** *